

Shultz aide to draft new strategy on captives

By Bryan Brumley

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WASHINGTON — Secretary of State George P. Shultz has assigned a top aide to reassess the Reagan administration's policies on Iran and the hostages held in Lebanon, and to fashion a new government-wide approach, officials say.

"Shultz wants to find out, first of all, what the hell happened. And second, he doesn't want to get blindsided by some new revelation," said a State Department source, who asked not to be identified.

Michael Armacost, the undersecretary for political affairs, was named last week as the administration's point man on Iran to hammer out a new plan to win freedom for Americans hostages held in Beirut by terrorists with ties to Tehran.

President Reagan last week called Peggy Say, the sister of Associated Press correspondent Terry A. Anderson, one of at least five Americans

held by Islamic extremists in Lebanon, and assured her that administration officials would "do everything they can" to free her brother. Anderson and another hostage, Thomas Sutherland, an official at the American University of Beirut, are being held by Islamic Jihad, a terrorist group closely linked with Iranian government officials. Islamic Jihad claims to have killed another American hostage, William Buckley, but his body has not been found.

Three other Americans taken hostage this fall may be held by another group, which may have links with another Iranian organization.

Amid stunning revelations of secret U.S. dealings with Tehran, Armacost chaired a meeting last week of Iran experts from various agencies dealing with foreign and military affairs, to chart how to free the hostages.

"First, we have to figure out what our policy is," said a second depart-

ment source, also speaking anonymously.

Day-to-day affairs will be handled, as before, in government offices that deal with Iran, such as the Departments of State and Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency.

During Thanksgiving week, however, much of that activity appeared to be temporarily paralyzed by revelations of White House deals that sent arms to Iran and that transferred up to \$30 million to aid the contra rebels fighting Nicaragua's Sandinista government. After the arms shipments, Islamic Jihad released three Americans it was holding, although Reagan has denied there was a swap of arms for captives.

At the State Department, the men and women in the office of counterterrorism, who thought all along they were in charge of U.S. efforts to gain release of the hostages, are setting about their task again.

The office has a new head, L. Paul Bremer 3d, appointed ambassador-at-large for counterterrorism in August to replace Robert Oakley and his deputy, Parker Borg, who left the department before disclosure of the Iran arms deal.

Bremer heads an interagency group on counterterrorism. Many details of that effort, which heavily involves intelligence agencies, remain secret, as do most diplomatic efforts to free the hostages.

"People are working very quietly behind the scenes," said a third State Department official, who also spoke in exchange for anonymity. "We are pursuing various channels, although not perhaps as imaginatively as Ollie North."

Lt. Col. Oliver L. North is the former National Security Council aide whom Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d said was principally responsible for arranging the transfer of arms to Tehran and use of profits

from the sale to help the contras at a time when such aid was prohibited by Congress.

State Department officials say that Shultz opposed the arrangement from its inception, in the late summer of 1985, and that the department knew no details of the deal.

The mood in the department ranged from simple confusion to outrage after the disclosures that led to the firing of North and resignation of national security adviser John M. Poindexter.

As they piece together what happened, in parallel with inquiries at the Justice Department and on Capitol Hill, foreign policy experts will chart new policy toward Iran and freeing the hostages, although they were reluctant to make any predictions.

They said they would be guided by four goals outlined by Reagan: winning release of the hostages; ending Iran's six-year-old war with Iraq; persuading Iran to end its support for terrorism, and opening up a dialogue with "moderate" or "pragmatic" officials within the Iranian government.

There appears scant hope for quick release of the hostages. "There doesn't seem to be anything in the wind," said one official.

And specialists who attempt to follow events in Iran describe the situation there as "murky."

John Adams, who for the last year has dealt directly with the hostage families, said that his role remains the same.

Following the dismissal of North, he said, "How the government goes about securing the release of the hostages will be changed."

"There is some confusion among the families," said Adams. "There has been no communication recently from the captors. In some ways, that is good, because there have been no new threats."

Adams said that "it is unclear how much the hostages know" about the revelations coming out of Washington, Tehran and Tel Aviv, which helped ship the weaponry to Iran.

David P. Jacobsen, released from Beirut last month, said that for many months the captors allowed the hostages to listen daily to broadcasts by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America, but that now there was no telling whether that was the case.